

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

35 USC 102

The Office rejected **claims 12 and 15-16** under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Miller (U.S. Pat. No. 4,080,424). As the applicant amended claim 12 to incorporate all elements of allowable claim 13, the rejection should be moot. Dependent claims 15-16 are dependent on allowable amended claim 12 and should therefore also be deemed allowable.

New claim 17 was added to replace prior claim 12. New claim 17 expressly requires a step of "...recycling one portion of the substantially hydrogen sulfide-free flashed hydrocarbon vapor to the absorber, and using another portion of the substantially hydrogen sulfide-free flashed hydrocarbon vapor as a stripping gas..." and a step of "...further reducing pressure of the flashed solvent and separating the pressure-reduced flashed solvent into a carbon dioxide stream and a carbon dioxide-depleted lean hydrogen sulfide-containing physical solvent..." New claim 18 requires that the step of "...separating is performed in the high-pressure flash vessel and the medium pressure flash vessel..." These elements are neither taught nor suggested in Miller et al.

On the contrary, Miller exclusively recycles flash vapors from the intermediate flash vessel. Moreover, Miller flashes the solvent in the low pressure vessel to atmospheric pressure and so desorbs both, CO₂ and H₂S, which are then separated from each other in a chemical solvent circuit to so produce a sulfur product and the desulfurized stripping gas. Such method and system precludes use of the dual use of flashed gases as presently claimed. Thus, new claims 17 and 18 should also be deemed non-obvious over Miller.

Allowable Subject Matter

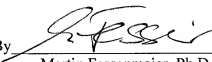
Claims 1-11 were considered allowable by the examiner. The applicant agrees and claims 1-11 remain unchanged. The examiner also indicated that claims 13 and 14 would be allowable if based on claim 12. Claim 12 was amended accordingly, claim 13 was canceled, and claim 14 was amended to correct the dependency. Claims 15-16 remained unchanged. Therefore, claims 1-12 and 14-16 are allowable.

Request For Allowance

Claims 1-12, 14-18 are pending in this application. The applicant requests allowance of all pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,
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